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The six hundred and sixty-eighth meeting of the Club was held at the Criterion in Piccadilly, London, W.1 on Tuesday, 19th January, 1971 at 7 p.m.

Chairman: Dr. J. F. Monk; present: 18 members and 13 guests.

The speaker was Dr. D. W. Snow who addressed the Club on "Field Studies in Guyana", and illustrated his talk with a gramophone record.

The Cambridge collection from the Malagasy Region

by C. W. Benson

(PART II)

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Charadrius leschenaultii Lesson: Both Rountree *et al.* (1952: 175) and Watson *et al.* (1963: 149) consider it rare in Mauritius. There are five specimens, all in non-breeding dress, collected in January 1864 or 1865, and R. Newton (1958: 55) evidently found it not uncommon. Watson *et al.* (1963: 167) state that dates are unknown for the Seychelles. There is a specimen in non-breeding dress collected by E. Newton on Mahé on 26th January, 1867. He (1867: 342, as *Aegialitis geoffroyi*) found it common there. Loustau-Lalanne (1963: 17) regards it as a permanent resident, probably breeding, but this certainly requires confirmation.

Numenius arquata orientalis (Brehm): Watson *et al.* (1963: 167) record *N. madagascariensis* (Linnaeus) from the Seychelles. Despite this misleading name, on geographical grounds this is most unlikely, and I am unaware of any authentic record from anywhere in the Malagasy Region. Loustau-Lalanne (1963: 17) does not mention this species, but does record *N. a. orientalis*. This can be substantiated by a specimen collected by E. Newton on Mahé on 31st January, 1867, sexed ♀ and showing the colour-characters of this form. The bill (culmen from base) measures 167 mm. Newton (1867: 346) found this species much less common than *N. phaeopus* (Linnaeus), this also applying in such areas as Madagascar and the Comoros (Benson, 1967: 90).

Xenus cinereus (Güldenstaedt): According to Rountree *et al.* (1952: 157), there is no proof of its occurrence on Mauritius. There is however a specimen collected by Dr. W. H. Power on 13th January, 1864.

Glareola maldivarum Fischer: Rountree *et al.* (1952: 179, as *G. orientalis* Leach) record it as accidental on Mauritius, mentioning a specimen in the Mauritius Institute. There is another specimen in Cambridge, collected by

Dr. W. H. Power at Cannonier's Point on 24th December, 1864. It was originally labelled as *G. ocularis* Verreaux, but appears to be an immature *maldivarum*, the black line encircling the throat still poorly developed. Compared with an immature *ocularis*, in which of course there is no sign of such a black line, the bill is less robust, the chestnut of the axillaries and under wing-coverts is richer in tone, and chestnut on the abdomen is lacking. The immature *ocularis* differs from adults of its species in having the crown less dark, not contrasting with the mantle, and the chin and throat pale buffy, markedly contrasting with the chest. Unfortunately the outer rectrices of the *maldivarum* are worn and incomplete, measuring 65 mm. only (outer remiges also worn, wing 168 mm. only), so that it is impossible to be absolutely sure that it is this species, not *G. pratincola* (Linnaeus) (cf. Vaurie, 1965: 453). But the former is the most likely, for it has also been recorded from the Seychelles (Benson & Roux, *Oiseau*, 1967: 145). These authors did not give measurements of the two specimens which they examined. They are, in mm.:

	Wing	Outer rectrix
♂	189	84
♀	191	75

Bailey (*Ibis*, 1967: 439) records seeing a *pratincola* in the Seychelles in November. He was presumably following Watson *et al.* (1963), whom he quotes, in treating *maldivarum* as conspecific with *pratincola*. Oustalet's record, to which he refers, is based on the two specimens of *maldivarum* discussed above.

Streptopelia capicola tropica (Reichenow): Two of the three specimens collected by Bewsher on Anjouan, in the Comoros, recorded by E. Newton (*Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond.*, 1877: 300) as *Turtur semitorquatus* (Rüppell), and originally so marked on the labels, are available. They are *S. capicola*, and this should dispel any doubt that might still linger as to the occurrence of *S. semitorquata* in the Comoros, rejected by Benson (1960: 49).

Psittacula eupatria wardi (E. Newton): There were originally eight specimens in Cambridge, two of which were exchanged with the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard, in 1935. None of these was collected later than 1870, though there are three in London (ex H. B. Tristram) dated 1880-81 (see also *Tristram Cat. Birds*, 1889: 75). All nine are merely labelled "Seychelles". Two of the Cambridge specimens have a black collar, and are evidently males (the sexes are illustrated in *Ibis*, 1876, plate 6). They have wing 204, 209, as against 193, 194, 196 (one incomplete) mm. in the others, which lack the black collar and are presumably ♀♀. The specimens in London also lack the collar, and have wing 180, 189, 202 mm. Presumably they too are ♀♀. There is a mounted ♂ specimen in Paris (Jouanin, 1962: 280), presumably one of the two collected by Lantz on Mahé in December 1877 (Oustalet, *Bull. Soc. Philom. Paris* 2(4), 1878: 165-166). Oustalet quotes Newton that it also occurred on Silhouette and possibly Praslin, evidently from the table in E. Newton (1867: 359). But apart from this, Newton only (1867: 341) definitely gives Mahé as a locality. Abbott collected a specimen on Mahé in March 1893, but thought it on the verge of extinction, though by report still common on Silhouette (Ridgway, *Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus.* 18, 1895: 509, 513). I have not traced any evidence of its existence later than 1893.

Psittacula exsul (A. Newton): The only known material, consisting of a ♂ (perhaps immature), a ♀ and two bones, from Rodriguez, in Cambridge, has been discussed in some detail by Hachisuka (1953: 185–187). The ♂ has wing 202, the ♀ 194 mm. No evidence of the existence of this species has been forthcoming since 1874; see also Gill (*Ibis*, 1967: 387).

Otus insularis (Tristram): Gaymer *et al.* (1969: 167) take note of a specimen in Cambridge, collected on Mahé.

Neodrepanis hypoxantha Salomonsen (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 53, 1953: 182–183): Salomonsen (*Oiseau* 35, no. spécial, 1965: 103–111) could trace only nine specimens. There is a tenth, in Cambridge. It is a ♂ in breeding dress, received from Watkins & Doncaster, dealers in natural history specimens, in October 1879. There is no information as to the locality or date of collecting. It is at once distinguishable from a ♂ in breeding dress of *N. coruscans* Sharpe, not only by colour-differences, but also by its shorter, less curved bill (culmen exposed 20 as against 24 mm.). The difference in the emargination and shape of the first (outer) primary, as explained and illustrated by Salomonsen (1933), is also clearly apparent.

Hypsipetes borbonicus subsp.: There is a series of four specimens of *H. b. borbonicus* (Forster), of Réunion, and 22 of *H. b. olivaceus* Jardine & Selby, of Mauritius. Excluding juveniles apparently not yet fully grown, wing-lengths in mm., together with those of material in Paris, confirm Benson (1960: 69), from measurements of the relatively scanty material in London, that *olivaceus* is the larger:

	Number of specimens	Wing
<i>H. b. borbonicus</i>	7	102–120 (113.0)
<i>H. b. olivaceus</i>	28	122–141 (131.6)

The only perceptible colour-difference is that *olivaceus* has the crown less intensely black and glossy. An apparent juvenile of *olivaceus* in Cambridge has the plumage as a whole tinged rusty, the throat white instead of grey. For comments on juveniles of *H. crassirostris* and *madagascariensis*, see Appendix 1.

Xenopirostris polleni (Schlegel): Rand (1936: 466) found this to be a rare bird of the forest of the Humid East in Madagascar. There are six specimens in Cambridge. Three appear to be adult, with the mantle, back and wing-coverts grey, the chest to abdomen white. The others appear to be immature, the grey above replaced by olive, the white below strongly washed with rufous, except in the area adjacent to the black throat, where there is a narrow band of white extending along the sides of the neck, only interrupted in the middle of the nape. Also, the gloss of the black head is less strong in the young birds, and bluish rather than violaceous in tone. There are four specimens in London, two apparently adult, two immature.

Dorst (*Oiseau*, 1960: 261) remarks on the similarity in plumage between *Tylas eduardi* Hartlaub and the genus *Xenopirostris*. The similarity in plumage, including the whole pattern, between immature *X. polleni* and *T. e. eduardi* (apparently at any age), is startling, although the former has a much heavier bill. Although not identical in colour, the adult of *polleni* still has a very similar pattern. Virtually nothing is known about *polleni* in life, though from reading Rand (*op. cit.*) it would appear that the two species are sympatric, and possibly even without any ecological difference. The relationship of these two should be studied further in the field.

Foudia sechellarum E. Newton: The following measurements in mm. have been taken from the material in London, Paris and Cambridge:

	Wing (figures <i>in extenso</i>)	Tail (in summary)
	Frigate	
♂♂	65, 68, 68, 72 (68.2)	43-46 (43.9)
♀♀	nil	nil
	Marianne	
♂♂	73, 74, 74, 74, 75, 76, 76, 77, 78, 78 (75.5)	46-49 (47.2)
♀♀	67, 70*, 71, 71, 72, 72, 73, 74 (71.2)	44-48 (45.7)
	Praslin	
♂♂	74, 75	47-48 (47.5)
♀♀	68	44
	Cousin	
♂♂	69, 70, 72, 72, 73, 73 (71.5)	43-47 (44.6)
♀♀	66, 66, 67*, 68, 68*, 69 (67.3)	40-45 (43.1)

The sexing is according to the collector's labels, except that in the case of the asterisked figures there would appear to have been mis-sexing, and they are placed where they seem more properly to belong. The italicised figures are from ♂♂ in breeding dress. Averages are also italicised.

Crook (*Ibis*, 1961: 520-521) has drawn attention to minor inter-island variation in colour. The figures above suggest that the population of Marianne, now extinct, showed a tendency to relatively large size. Possibly this also applies to that of Praslin. Crook also found that the birds of Frigate have longer bills than those of Cousin, though not so deep at the base. Culmen-lengths from base of skull of the above material are:

Frigate	♂♂	17 (17.0)
Marianne	♂♂	17-17.5 (17.1)
	♀♀	16.5-17 (16.9)
Praslin	♂♂	16.5 (16.5)
	♀♀	17 (17.0)
Cousin	♂♂	16-17.5 (16.7)
	♀♀	15-16.5 (15.7)

The only inference that might be drawn from these figures is that the Marianne birds are the longest billed, but this may be merely proportionate to their larger size as illustrated by the wing and tail-lengths.

Marianne is the type locality of this species, and as recorded in Appendix 1 there are three syntypes in Cambridge, where there are also two topotypes, one ♂, one ♀.

Appendix 1: Type material

All the material of the forms listed below appears to have been used in the original published descriptions. No specimen was ever formally designated as a type, although some were marked as such by Prof. Newton on the labels and in his register of the collection. The significance of all of this material has now been clearly indicated in red ink, and an indication made as to whether a particular specimen is a holotype or syntype.

It might be wondered why *Circus spilonotus macroscyles* A. Newton (*Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond.*, 1863: 180) is not included. The holotype is in London (Warren, 1966). Nor is there justification for including *Falco newtoni* (Gurney, *Ibis*, 1863: 34), of which there may be also pertinent material in London. A specimen of *Cuculus poliocephalus rochii* Hartlaub (*Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond.*, 1862: 224), which might be supposed to be the holotype, appears not to be. Such a

specimen may have been in the possession of Hartlaub, who may have lost it (Benson *et al.*, 1970: 17).

(a) Names recognised in Peters *et al.* (1931–70); volume number in brackets

Sarothrura watersi (Bartlett) (vol. 2): 1 ♂. Two other syntypes in London (Warren, 1966).

Gallinula chloropus pyrrhorhoa A. Newton (vol. 2): 1 ♀.

**Streptopelia picturata comorensis* (E. Newton) (vol. 3): 1 ♂, 1 ♀, 1 juv. ♀.

Streptopelia picturata aldabranus (P. L. Sclater) (vol. 3): 1 ♂, 1 ♀. Considered to be from the Amirante Islands, not Aldabra (Benson, 1967: 76).

Coracopsis nigra barklyi (E. Newton) (vol. 3): 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀. Another ♂ syntype in London (Warren, 1966).

Psittacula eupatria wardi (E. Newton) (vol. 3): 1 ♂, 2 ♀♀.

Psittacula krameri echo (A. & E. Newton) (vol. 3): 1 ♂, 1 ♀, 2 juv. ♂♂. Another syntype (♂) was sent to Paris in 1897, and another (♀) to Harvard in 1935. It is surprising that Greenway (1967: 108) makes no reference to the first four of these specimens.

Psittacula exsul (A. Newton) (vol. 3): 1 ♀.

Hypsipetes crassirostris crassirostris E. Newton (vol. 9; no longer a binomial in view of *H. c. mobeliensis*, see Benson, 1960: 68): 1 ♂, 1 ♀, 1 juv. ♂. All three were collected on 28th January, 1867. The juvenile has markedly rusty margins to the secondaries, and the beak was "brownish, under surface yellow", whereas the ♂ had it "dirty orange" the ♀ "bright orange". Eight specimens out of the 25 in London have similar rusty margins. For descriptions of juveniles of *H. madagascariensis* (Müller), see Benson & Penny (1970: 478).

Tylas eduardi eduardi Hartlaub (vol. 9): 1 ♂.

Copsychus sechellarum A. Newton (vol. 10): 1 ♂.

**Turdus bewsheri bewsheri* E. Newton (vol. 10): 1 ♂, 1 ♀.

Neomixis tenella tenella (Hartlaub) (vol. 10): 1 ♀. Hartlaub gives no precise locality. The specimen is in fact labelled "♀, captured on her nest, Mohambo, September 1865", collector W. T. Gerrard. Forty-two specimens in London from northern Madagascar assigned to *N. t. tenella*, and among which all the localities for this subspecies given by Delacour (Oiseau, 1931: 481–483) are represented, agree best with it and in particular nine from the vicinity of Maroantsetra seem identical with it. By contrast, 23 specimens of *N. t. orientalis* Delacour are much less bright yellow below and darker olive above. In this series three of the localities mentioned by Delacour are represented, namely Fanovana, Ivohibe and Vondrozo. All of the localities for the species as a whole mentioned by Delacour are shown on the map in Rand (1936: 147). On or near the east coast the most southerly for nominate *tenella* is Maroantsetra, at 15° 24' S., 49° 43' E., within the bay enclosed by the peninsula ending in Cape Masoala. The most northerly for *orientalis* is Fanovana, at 18° 55' S., 48° 30' E. A. Newton (*Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond.*, 1865: 832–837) dealt with a general collection of birds, mammals and reptiles made by Gerrard at Mohambo in July and August 1865, but gives no indication as to where exactly it is situated. In *Carte de Madagascar* (D. Roblet, Paris, 1885) a small stream Mohambo is shown on the Cape Masoala peninsula, flowing into the sea on the eastern side at 15° 53' E., and so only about 75 km. south-east of Maroantsetra. This map also shows a locality Mahambo (not Mohambo) on the east coast at 17° 30' S. Despite the close similarity of specimens from Maroantsetra to the type, and the discrepancy in name (in any case only very slight), it seems more likely that Gerrard obtained the type at this second, more southerly locality. It is not far north of the port which had already been established on the east coast at Tamatave, at 18° 10' S. (see E. Newton, *Ibis*, 1862: 265; 1863: 333). That the type was obtained on the remote Masoala peninsula seems much less likely. But the matter needs further investigation by collecting at Mahambo, the southern locality. If specimens therefrom agree with the type, this should be regarded as the restricted type-locality.

Hypositta corallirostris (A. Newton) (vol. 12): 1 ♂.

Zosterops borbonica e. newtoni Hartlaub (vol. 12): 2 ♂♂. This form is not in fact recognized in Peters *et al.*, but see Storer (*Auk*, 1968: 127), who designates one of these specimens the lectotype.

**Zosterops maderaspatana anjouanensis* E. Newton (vol. 12): 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀.

Zosterops mayottensis semiflava E. Newton (vol. 12): 1 ♂, 1 ♀. Apart from these two syntypes, *pace* Greenway (1967: 427), there are six (not one) specimens of this extinct form in London; while Lantz collected seven, three of which are in Paris (Jouanin, 1962: 277). A third specimen in Cambridge was received from Lantz in 1878. There is also a specimen, the most recent, in Washington, collected by Abbott on 11th April, 1890 (Ridgway, *Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus.* 18, 1895: 509, 514). There is no conclusive evidence that it occurred anywhere except Marianne.

Zosterops modesta E. Newton (vol. 12): 4 ♂♂, 1 ♀. Newton had in all seven specimens. One of the other two is in Paris, and listed by Jouanin (1962: 297).

Foudia sebellarum E. Newton (vol. 15): 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀.

Foudia flavicans A. Newton (vol. 15): 3 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀. In all there are 17 specimens in Cambridge.

(b) Names not in Peters et al. (1931-70), publication awaited in vol. 8 or 11; see instead W. L. Sclater's *Systema Avium Ethiopicarum* (1924-30)

Newtonia brunneicauda brunneicauda (A. Newton): 2 ♀♀.

Tchitrea corvina E. Newton: 3 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀. Newton writes of a juv. ♂, similar to ♀. But the material appears to consist of five adults, as now sexed.

**Tchitrea mutata vulpina* E. Newton: 2 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀.

Calamocichla newtoni (Hartlaub): 2 ♂♂.

**Nesillas typica longicaudata* (E. Newton): 1 ♂, 1 ♀.

Bebrornis rodericanus (A. Newton): 1 ♂. There are two other specimens in Cambridge.

*Not all of the material used according to the description; no record traced of the subsequent history of the extra material.

(c) Name not recognized.

Gallinula dionysiana A. Newton: 1 o. Considered a synonym of *G. chloropus meridionalis* (Brehm), see p.172 above. This name seems never to have been used since it was originally proposed well over 50 years ago, so that under the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (1964) it is a *nomen oblitum*.

Appendix 2: Material of forms not already mentioned, considered by Jouanin (1962)

Nesoenas mayeri (Prévost & Knip): 1 ♂, 3 ♀♀. One of the females, from Grand Bassin (Mauritius), 23rd July, 1861 had "eggs in ovary large". R. Newton (1958: 58) gives the normal breeding season as from October to February, but does also record an egg in May.

Streptopelia picturata rostrata (Bonaparte): ♂, Marianne, 12th February, 1867 (E. Newton): 2 o, "Seychelles", May 1870 (E. P. Wright).

Falco araea (Oberholser): 3 ♂♂, 5 ♀♀. For a systematic discussion and comparison with *F. newtoni*, see Benson (1967: 70-72).

Falco punctatus Temminck: 5 ♂♂ (wing 161, 171, 172, 172, 174), 4 ♀♀ (wing 173, 173, 178, 185 mm.).

Bebrornis sebellensis (Oustalet): 2 ♂♂, Marianne, September 1877 (Lantz); 1 o, Cousin, February 1888 (J. J. Lister). Jouanin uses the generic name *Nesillas*.

Coracina newtoni (Pollen): 1 ♂, 3 ♀♀. Jouanin uses the generic name *Coquus* for this and the next species.

Coracina typica (Hartlaub): 7 ♂♂, 3 ♀♀, 1 juv.o.

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Postscript

Bubulcus ibis sebellarum (Salomonsen): There is a specimen in Cambridge labelled "Indian Ocean, *H.M.S. Rapid*, December 1864". Dr. D. R. Stoddart, of the Department of Geography, Cambridge, put me in touch with the Public Record Office, where thanks to J. Walford I was able to consult the log of the Voyage of *H.M.S. Rapid* in question. She left Mauritius on 26th October 1864, and arrived at Zanzibar on 17th January 1865. On 1st December 1864, she was at Mahé, in the Seychelles, and visited the Amirantes (to as far south as Alphonse) between the 4th and 10th, when she returned to Mahé, leaving the Seychelles for Zanzibar on the 22nd. It can be reasonably assumed that this specimen was collected in the Seychelles or the Amirantes. Its interest is that, although it has its full complement of primaries, its wing-length is 216 mm. only, thus considerably less than in other specimens from Aldabra, Farquhar atoll and the Seychelles (Benson and Penny, 1970). Furthermore it has some golden cinnamon rather than ginger-buff feathers on the crown. It seems wise to recognise *sebellarum*. It would appear to be of Asiatic origin, like *Ixobrychus sinensis* in the Seychelles, and to be derived from *B. i. coromandus*. It occurs in the Seychelles, and perhaps in the Amirantes and on Farquhar, though a small sized specimen from Aldabra is like *B. i. ibis* in colour (Benson and Penny, *op. cit.*). For other recent references to this question, see Vaurie (1965: 65) and Benson (1967: 95).

There are three other specimens in Cambridge collected during the same voyage of *H.M.S. Rapid*, all dated December 1864:—*Ardea cinerea*, "Amirante Islands"; *Butorides striatus*, "Amirante Islands, *H.M.S. Rapid*"; and *Gygis alba*, "Indian Ocean, *H.M.S. Rapid*". The first two are mentioned by Benson (1967: 67–68).

Porphyrio madagascariensis (Latham): Rountree *et al.* (1952: 180) consider its status on Mauritius controversial. They quote E. Newton that it should be considered an endemic resident, though he (*Trans. Norfolk and Norwich Nat. Soc.* 4, 1888: 552) suggests that it was possibly introduced. It seems much more likely that it arrived unaided by man, as have so many other Rallidae on oceanic islands. Long African experience leads me to believe that this species is never normally handled by man. There is a female in Cambridge labelled "Mapou, Mauritius, 10th August 1860, eggs size of no. 4 shot", this last item suggesting that the oocytes in the ovary were of diameter about 3 mm. Watson *et al.* (1963: 143) list *P. alleni* from Mauritius, but presumably really intended *P. madagascariensis*. The occurrence of *alleni* is rejected by Rountree *et al.* (1952: 157). Neither species is mentioned by R. Newton (1958). Possibly *madagascariensis* has died out on Mauritius, though it is easily overlooked.

Psittacula eupatria wardi (E. Newton): Material of this extinct form has been discussed above. Greenway (1967: 332) records its representation in New York. G. S. Keith (pers. comm.) informs me that there is a female in the American Museum of Natural History, lacking the black collar, wing 182 mm. Like the specimens in London, it was received from H. B. Tristram, and was collected by H. L. Warry somewhere in the Seychelles in June, 1881.